

House Bill 172
March 3, 2009
Presented by Chris Smith
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the record I am Chris Smith, Deputy Director of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). I appear as an informational witness and to answer any questions you may have.

For anyone born after January 1 of 1985, passing hunter education is required in order to purchase a Montana hunting license. HB 172 provides an alternative to those who cannot pass the written hunter education test because of their cognitive abilities so long as they are accompanied by a licensed adult hunter in the field at all times.

Minnesota has had a similar law in place for many years. They have had very few individuals take advantage of the law and reported no problems with safety. Similarly we anticipate few individuals, perhaps half a dozen out of 7,000 hunter education students annually, utilizing this option. Since current law (MCA 53-20-102) is very specific about what constitutes "developmentally disabled," we do not anticipate abuse.

We would expect to have our regional staff involved in establishing eligibility and administering this segment of our hunter education program as opposed to asking our instructors to do so. And since we anticipate very few requests, it would not be a workload issue or have a fiscal impact.

I am available to answer any questions you might have.